

Brookline Department of Public Health

11 Pierce Street

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www.brooklinema.gov/health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more Information, Contact:

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Bat Tests Positive in Brookline: A Public Health Advisory

Brookline Department of Public Health (BDPH) officials report that a bat found in Brookline tested positive for rabies on Friday, August 14, 2015. To date, dozens of bats have already been captured in the homes of Brookline residents and tested for rabies this year. This is the first bat that has tested positive.

The Brookline Department of Public Health is issuing a Rabies Advisory to stress the importance of capturing and testing any bat found inside a home or other building where there is the possibility of human or pet exposure. Pat Maloney, Chief of Environmental Health in Brookline, stated: "If a bat is found inside a house or other building, do not release the bat outdoors until you can safely rule out an exposure."

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, "...Situations that **might** qualify as exposures include finding a bat in the same room as a person who might be unaware that a bite or direct contact had occurred (e.g., a deeply sleeping person awakens to find a bat in the room or an adult witnesses a bat in the room with a previously unattended child, mentally disabled person, or intoxicated person.)" "If the bat cannot be captured and tested, all potentially exposed persons should be vaccinated," advises Barbara Westley, Brookline Public Health Nurse. Pets that have been exposed to bats may need booster vaccinations and an observation period.

Persons and pets exposed to bats should be reported to BDPH, 617-730-2300. Since there is often no visible bite mark or scratch left on the skin because of a bat's small tooth size, bat bites may go undetected. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "95% of people infected by bats over the past 10 years were unaware they had been bitten or scratched" Rabies vaccinations consist of a series of shots given over a period of a month.

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The Brookline Department of Public Health reminds Brookline residents of the following precautions concerning rabies:

CONTROL MEASURES

- If you discover a bat in your home or other building, determine if any humans or pets may have been exposed to the bat.
- If an exposure is ruled out, the bat may be released outside through an open window.
- If a human or pet has been exposed to a bat, the bat should be captured and tested for rabies. You should not try to capture the bat yourself except as a last resort. The bat should not be crushed during capture since it then may not be acceptable for testing. If possible, have the bat captured by a professional pest control expert and sent to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Rabies Lab for testing. A listing of professional pest control companies can be obtained by contacting BDPH, 617-730-2300 or by visiting the Environmental Health webpage at <http://brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1044>
- Do not pick up, touch or feed wild or stray animals of any kind. This includes leaving pet food outside for your own animals or other animals.
- Avoid sick or strange-acting animals.
- Vaccinate all cats, dogs and ferrets against rabies.
- Fasten trash can lids tightly. Garbage attracts wild animals.
- Cap chimneys and seal openings into houses, garages, etc. For a brochure on critter-proofing your property, contact the BDPH, 617-730-2300 or by visiting the Town of Brookline Environmental Health webpage at <http://brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/7993>
- If you are bitten or scratched by any animal you should promptly wash the wound(s) with soapy water and see a healthcare provider immediately. You should also report the incident to BDPH.
- If your pet is bitten or scratched by another animal, wear gloves when handling or cleaning your pet. Afterwards, wash your hands thoroughly. Report the incident to your veterinarian and to BDPH.

If you have any questions regarding rabies or how to respond to bats in your home, please contact the BDPH at 730-2300.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Brookline Department of Public Health (BDPH)	(617) 730-2300
Brookline Police Department (Animal Control Officer)	(617) 730-2730
Town Clerk's Office (Dog Licenses)	(617) 730-2010
DPW Highway Department (Removal of Dead Animals from Public Ways)	(617) 879-4900
Animal Rescue League (Responds to Injured Animals)	(617) 426-9170
Mass. Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (To Report Abuse of Animals)	(617) 522-6008 or 800-628-5808